

## CLAIMS

I claim:

5        1.     A method for ranking a user's preference to search a class constituting one or more items comprising:

submitting said class by said user to a search mechanism;

submitting a plurality of attributes of said class by said search mechanism to said user;

10      choosing one or more attributes from said plurality of attributes by said user;

submitting a rank for each of said one or more attributes by said user to said search mechanism; and

displaying one or more items from said class along with a value of said one or more attributes for each of said items by said search mechanism to said user.

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2.     The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of attributes of said class submitted by said search mechanism to said user is a non-editable list.

20      3.     The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of attributes of said class submitted by said search mechanism to said user is an editable list wherein said user can add or delete one or more of said attributes.

4.     The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of attributes submitted by said search mechanism to said user has a maximum threshold set on one or more of said

plurality of attributes such that a total rank of said one or more attributes submitted by said user to said search mechanism does not exceed said maximum threshold.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising:

5 normalizing said rank of one or more attributes when said maximum threshold is reached.

6. The method of claim 5 further comprising:

10 calculating a total value which is a difference between said maximum threshold and a current rank of an attribute;

calculating sum of said attribute;

calculating a ratio which is said total rank divided by said sum if said sum is greater than said total rank; and

15 calculating adjusted ranks of each of said one or more attributes if said sum is greater than said total rank.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein said rank of each of said one or more attributes is submitted by said user to said search mechanism via a plurality of radio buttons.

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8. The method of claim 1 wherein said rank of each of said one or more attributes is submitted by said user to said search mechanism via a slider within a sliding bar.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said one or more items displayed to said user is displayed as a table with one or more headings corresponding to said one or more attributes sent by said user to said search mechanism.

5 10. The method of claim 9 wherein said one or more items displayed to said user is generated from data obtained from a central database source.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein said one or more items displayed to said user is generated from data obtained from an aggregation of said items on the Internet.

10 12. The method of claims 10 or 11 further comprising:  
storing said generated items in a data structure by filling in a plurality of fields in said data structure.

15 13. The method of claim 12 wherein one or more of said plurality of fields correspond to one or more of said attributes submitted by said user to said search mechanism.

20 14. The method of claim 1 wherein said value of said one or more attributes for each of said items is computed using information from said data structure.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein said user can change said rank of said one or more attributes after said items are displayed to said user changing the order of one or more of said displayed items.

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16. The method of claim 15 wherein said changing of rank further comprising:  
clicking on an attribute heading.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein said changing of rank further comprising:  
5 submitting a new rank of one or more attributes via said plurality of radio buttons.

18. The method of claim 15 wherein said changing of rank further comprising:  
submitting a new rank of one or more attributes via said slider within a sliding bar.

10 19. The method of claim 1 wherein value of said one or more attributes for  
each of said items can be updated in real time changing the order of one or more of said  
displayed items.